



Celluloid Heroes: Part II ***or: The Tangled Web of Charlie Manson***

David McGowan
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“[In Hollywood], everyone's a producer or a hit man.”

Douglas Clark, convicted Sunset Strip serial killer and the son of a Naval Intelligence operative

“I don't know if you guys have ever in your entire life shot anybody, but it's really fun to do.”

Former child actor Carol Bundy, Clark's convicted accomplice, speaking to the police

It has frequently been said that if you scratch just beneath the glossy and oh-so-glamorous exterior of the Hollywood dream factory, you will find the dark and ugly reality that lurks just beneath the surface. But just how dark and ugly is that reality?

There is certainly no shortage of recurrent weirdness that passes for business-as-usual in the land of make-believe that we like to call Hollywood. For such a small and tight-knit community, the Hollywood gang has generated more than its fair share of scandal and sleaze over the better part of the last century.

Is that merely because, in our celebrity-obsessed culture, every misstep of the entertainment community is open to such intense scrutiny? Would we find the same skeletons in the closets of any other group in the country that was subjected to such unabashed media and public voyeurism? Is Hollywood merely a microcosm of America itself, illuminated by the harsh glare of the stage lights?

If so, then it is truly a strange and scary world that we live in. Consider, if you will, just a few recent examples of Tinseltown weirdness:

- Actress Margot Kidder, missing for a week, surfaces in the bushes of a stranger's yard with her head shaved and a few of her teeth conspicuously absent.
- Actress Anne Heche similarly goes missing, only to show up at the door of a stranger in the middle of nowhere babbling about being beamed up to the mothership.
- Actor/comedian Martin Lawrence decides to stop traffic one day on busy Ventura Boulevard by wandering into the street, waving a gun and shouting incoherently.
- Actor Robert Downey, Jr. finds himself sleeping in the bed of a neighbor, with no idea of how he got there.

- Dr. Haing S. Ngor, who purportedly survived the killing fields of Cambodia before starring in Hollywood's version of events there, doesn't survive the streets of Hollywood; he is gunned down in February of 1996.
- Actor Jack Nicholson decides to blow off some steam by attacking the vehicle of another motorist with a golf club.
- Someone 'falls' to their death from the apartment of actor James Caan.
- Comic actor Eddie Murphy is arrested in the company of a transsexual prostitute. He/she dies a violent death shortly afterwards, though the press doesn't pay much attention.
- Actor Hugh Grant is arrested while being serviced by Hollywood prostitute "Divine" Brown. Brown's pimp subsequently surfaces in the company of a neo-Nazi singer who claims he was offered money by Courtney Love to kill Kurt Cobain. The would-be assassin turns up dead soon after telling this story to filmmaker Nick Broomfield.
- Actor Brian Keith, the former star of television's *Family Affair*, is found with a fatal bullet wound in his head on June 24, 1997. His death, ruled a suicide, continues a long tradition of Hollywood notables allegedly shooting themselves in the head. Included on that list are Herve "Tattoo" Villechaize (September 4, 1993), Del Shannon (December 8, 1990), Jon-Erik Hexum (October 12, 1984), Freddie "Chico" Prinze (January 29, 1977), Pete Duel (December 31, 1971), and George "Superman" Reeves (July 1, 1959).
- On June 2, 1996, the 35th anniversary of her grandfather Ernest's alleged suicide, Margaux Hemingway joins the list of Hollywood personalities whose deaths are attributed to drug overdoses. Margaux is the fifth member of her family to have their deaths ruled as suicides. River Phoenix's death on Halloween, 1993, outside of Johnny Depp's Viper Room, is also attributed to an overdose.

Nothing unusual about any of that, I suppose. Looking further back over the sordid history of Hollywood, consider also these examples of unexplained weirdness (and these examples are, it should be noted, just the tip of a very large iceberg):

- At Marlon Brando's Los Angeles estate, his son Christian shoots and kills sister Cheyenne's significant other, Dag Drollet, in May of 1990. Christian and his father claim that the shot was fired accidentally during a struggle for the gun. There is no sign of a struggle, and Drollet is found in a sitting position with a cigarette lighter and the remote control for the TV still in his hands. Attorney Robert Shapiro, who also represented Robert Evans in the *Cotton Club* murder case, cops a plea that results in Brando serving just five years. By that time, Cheyenne is dead, allegedly a suicide victim. Christian is later considered as a husband by Bonnie Lee Bakley, before she decides to marry Robert Blake. Five months later, Bakley is dead.
- Actors and actresses like Clara "It Girl" Bow, Frances Farmer, and the aforementioned Oscar Levant and Wallace Reid find themselves forcibly confined to mental hospitals. Farmer later tells of being beaten, raped, locked in a cage, and administered electroshock torture (oops ... I meant to say electroshock therapy).
- Mob enforcer Johnny Stompanato is found stabbed to death in the home of actress Lana Turner. Turner's young daughter takes the rap, though she doesn't appear to be physically capable of committing the crime.
- Actress Natalie Wood goes missing in the middle of the night from a yacht while in the company of actors Robert Wagner and Christopher Walken. She subsequently is found floating in the Pacific Ocean. Witnesses later claim that she had been in a motel room with Walken on Catalina Island.

- Aspiring actress Elizabeth "The Black Dahlia" Short is found literally cut in half, with her mutilated remains left on display, on January 15, 1947.
- People close to actress Sarah Miles develop a knack for committing suicide. There is the roommate who jumps out of the window of their shared apartment. There is the ex-gardener who owes Miles money and decides to gas himself. And of course there is the business manager who is discovered dead in Sarah's motel room and declared to be the victim of a drug overdose – though there is reportedly blood on his face and on the bed in which he is found. Miles has purportedly spent the night in the room of her co-star at the time: Burt Reynolds.
- Actress Thelma "Hot Toddy" Todd turns up dead in her car, allegedly the victim of suicide by means of carbon monoxide poisoning. Blood on her face, a cut lip and a dislodged tooth indicate that she was beaten senseless prior to her uhhh suicide. Todd had at one time been the wife of Pat DiCicco, one of "Lucky" Luciano's top lieutenants.
- Three years after Todd's death, popular comedian Ted Healy - who had had a fling with Thelma - is beaten to death. Though the details of his death were never reported, it has been fairly common knowledge in Hollywood circles for decades that Healy was beaten by DiCicco and actor Wallace Beery. Present at the time of the beating is Albert "Cubby" Broccoli – first cousin of DiCicco, friend of Howard Hughes, and one-time agent for Lana Turner. Broccoli goes on to produce the James Bond films, penned by British intelligence asset Ian Fleming. Assisting in covering up the murder of Healy is Shemp Howard of the Three Stooges, whose careers were launched by Healy.
- Comedian/actor John Belushi is found dead in his room in a West Hollywood hotel in March of 1982. He is said to be yet another victim of a drug overdose. His last known visitors, on the night of his death, are Robert DeNiro and Robin Williams. The story of his death, and tragically short life, is then told in a book by former Office of Naval Intelligence 'briefer' Bob Woodward.
- A number of the people involved with the movie *Rebel Without a Cause* die mysterious deaths at young ages – including stars James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo (who is stabbed to death outside of his apartment on November 12, 1976) and Nick Reid (who is found dead of mysterious causes on February 7, 1968).
- Silent film legend Ramon Navarro is found dead in his home on Halloween day, 1968. He has been brutally tortured and murdered in what appears for all the world to be a ritual homicide. Two brothers, both young male prostitutes, are charged with the crime.
- Actor Bob Crane is murdered and it subsequently emerges that he had a secret life that centered around a passion for hardcore, homemade porno films.

Nothing unusual about any of that either, I suppose. But consider the web spun by the man known as Charles Milles Manson. Now this is where we really cut to the core of the dark underbelly of Hollywood. Join me then, if you will, as we embark on a journey that I like to call "Seven Degrees of Charlie Manson."

Before doing so, allow me to introduce a few members of the stellar cast of this strange and twisted tale:

- Sharon Tate - the most famous of the Manson victims, and the daughter of Colonel Paul Tate, U.S. Army Intelligence. Tate was killed on August 9, 1969, along with Abigail Folger, Steven Parent, Jay Sebring, and Voytek Frykowski.
- Kenneth Anger - former child-star turned underground filmmaker, and the son of a 'military-industrial complex' engineer who developed machine-guns for Kellogg during WWII and later worked for Douglas Aircraft.

- Judy Garland - child actor and singer who was kept drugged on a daily basis from about the age of five, first by her mother, and then by the studios. Garland was found dead on the summer solstice of 1969, just seven weeks before the Tate/LaBianca murders.
- John Phillips - musician/composer who founded the singing group The Mamas and The Papas and who was born in a military hospital, the son of a career Marine officer. John later attended the U.S. Naval Academy.
- Roy Radin - theatrical producer who specialized in staging vaudeville revival shows. Radin was working with Robert Evans to produce *The Cotton Club* when he was shot some twenty-seven times in the head in 1983. Radin began his career while still a teenager by staging shows in Masonic temples.
- The Hell's Angels - the most well-known of the biker gangs that arose after WWII due to the efforts of returning OSS and military officers. The Angels were led by Ralph "Sonny" Barger, reportedly an informant for the Oakland Police Department who was also on the payroll of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.
- Jayne Mansfield - actress/sex symbol who was decapitated, allegedly in a car accident, on June 29, 1967. According to Jayne's daughter, Mansfield's parties featured the rich and famous getting naked and filming themselves. Tate and husband Roman Polanski were reportedly the producers and collectors of 'fame porn' as well.
- Robert F. Kennedy - U.S. Senator and presidential candidate who was assassinated in Hollywood on June 5, 1968. Kennedy was allegedly shot from point-blank range behind his right ear by Sirhan Sirhan, who was standing several yards in front of and to the left of the candidate. Like I said, shit happens.

Without further ado, we begin this journey - for no particular reason - with the aforementioned Phil Hartman, who was a highschool friend of Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, who later became a disciple of Charlie Manson, a jailhouse correspondent of John Hinckley, and the attempted assassin of President Gerald Ford, who was once a roommate of modeling entrepreneur Harry Conover, whose wife was the infamous Candy Jones, who was 'treated' by CIA-linked hypnotist William Jennings Bryan, who also 'treated' the purported Boston Strangler, Albert DeSalvo, whose name was written repetitively throughout the diaries of Sirhan Sirhan, who was also 'treated' by Bryan, who served as the technical director on *The Manchurian Candidate*, which was directed by John Frankenheimer, at whose beach house a dinner was held on June 5, 1968 whose attendees included "Mama" Cass Elliot, Roman Polanski, and Sharon Tate, who was killed just over a year later by followers of Charlie Manson, whose music was recorded by Doris Day's son, music producer Terry Melcher, who lived with girlfriend Candace Bergen at 10050 Cielo Drive the year before it became a slaughterhouse after being rented by Polanski, who initially was slated to pen the screenplay for *Day of the Dolphin*, which purported to tell the story of Dr. John Lilly, who was a friend of Timothy Leary, whose Mellon family-owned Millbrook estate was frequently visited by Dr. Max "Feelgood" Jacobson, who once 'treated' Judy Garland and who served as the personal physician of John Kennedy, whose assassination prompted the shelving of the film *The Manchurian Candidate* by its star, Frank Sinatra, who was a frequent companion of fellow 'Brat Packer' Sammy Davis, Jr., who was an acknowledged member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, from where Manson recruited killers Bobby "Cupid" Beausoleil and Susan "Sexy Sadie" Atkins, who confessed to her cellmates that she had stabbed to death actress Sharon Tate, who was inducted into witchcraft on the set of the Polanski-directed film *The Fearless Vampire Killers* by Alexander "King of the Witches" Saunders, who received 'training' as a child from Aleister Crowley, whose followers included Anton LaVey and fellow Church of Satan member Kenneth Anger, who was the roommate (and probable lover) of Family member Bobby Beausoleil, who once appeared in an underground film titled *Mondo Hollywood*, which also featured hairdresser and Manson victim Jay Sebring, who was a former lover of Sharon Tate, who was a friend of a wealthy widow named Charlene Caffritz,

who played host to - and filmed the exploits of - Charlie and some of his girls, who also lived for a time with Beach Boy Dennis Wilson, who recorded a song penned by Charlie, who was an occasional member of the entourage of Mama Cass, who was listed as a defense witness for Charlie's trial (but never called), as was her Mamas and the Papas band-mate John Phillips, who was close to Polanski, Tate, Melcher, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Cass Elliot, and film producer Robert Evans, who was working with - and very likely contracted the execution killing of - Roy Radin, whose assistant was Michael DeVinko *aka* Mickie DeVinko *aka* Mickie Deans, who married - just a few months before her untimely death - *Wizard of Oz* star Judy Garland, who as a teen was flooded with phone messages and telegrams by admirer Oscar Levant, whose dead body was found by Candace Bergen, who - as a photojournalist for *Life* magazine - covered the preempted presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy, who was romantically linked to Marilyn Monroe, who was also linked to Anton LaVey, who appeared in Kenneth Anger's *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (released in August of 1969) along with Bobby Beausoleil, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, who was a guest at the 1968 London wedding of Sharon Tate to Roman Polanski, who - during a nude photo shoot - molested a thirteen-year-old girl at the home of Jack Nicholson, who was a friend of Cass Elliot, as were Robert Evans and Manson victims Jay Sebring, Voytek Frykowski and Abigail Folger, who provided funding for the Himalayan Academy, which Kenneth Anger helped form with Timothy Leary, who was at the side of the stage at the 1969 Altamont concert where - while the Rolling Stones played the Process Church-inspired *Sympathy for the Devil** - a fan was killed on film by the Hell's Angels, who had been romanticized and transformed into anti-establishment heroes in the film *Scorpio Rising* by Kenneth Anger and the book *Hell's Angels* by Hunter S. Thompson, both of whom have been accused of making snuff films** for private collectors, which was also a favorite pastime of Charlie Manson, one of whose underage recruits was Didi Lansbury, who had written permission to travel with Charlie from her mother, Angela Lansbury, who starred as the control agent in *The Manchurian Candidate*, which was based on the novel of the same name by Richard Condon, who once served as a publicist for Walt Disney, who once owned the home where the Manson Family slaughtered Leno LaBianca and wife Rosemary, who was involved in the trafficking of drugs, as were many of those in this twisted saga, including Charles Manson, victims Voytek Frykowski and Abigail Folger, John Phillips and Kenneth Anger, who was a huge fan of the dark and violent imagery of the Rosicrucian-inspired, L. Frank Baum-penned *Oz* books, which inspired the band *The Magick Powerhouse of Oz*, which was led by Bobby Beausoleil, who was also at one time in the band *Love* with Arthur Lee, four of whose members later turned up dead or missing and presumed dead, as did Charlene Caffritz, Cass Elliot (who allegedly choked on a sandwich in 1974), Dennis Wilson (who allegedly drowned on December 28, 1983), and Gram Parsons, whose corpse was stolen and burned at Joshua Tree on the autumnal equinox of 1973 by his band's road manager, Phil Kaufman, who was a good friend from prison of Charlie Manson, who met (at Cass Elliot's house) and received money from victim Abigail Folger, who also funded Kenneth Anger, who at various times lived with both Jimmy Page (who purchased Crowley's home and many of his artifacts) and Keith Richards & Anita Pallenberg, whose home - in 1979 - yielded the body of a teenager who had been shot to death, as was John Lennon the next year by Mark David Chapman, who shortly before doing so met with - and offered a gift of live bullets to - Kenneth Anger, whose films were cited as a major influence by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, who was implicated by witnesses in the Halloween 1981 execution killing of New York photographer Ronald Sisman (a close associate of Roy Radin), who was reportedly in possession of a snuff film of one of the Son of Sam murders, which were allegedly committed by David Berkowitz, who from prison accurately described the Sisman killing *before* it happened and who took the fall for the Son of Sam murders to cover up the involvement of others, including possibly Roy Radin and wealthy art dealer Andrew Crispo, who admitted being present at the site of a ritual murder

which was committed by a man named Bernard LeGeros, who was the son of a State Department official, as was Pic Dawson, who was a regular member of the entourage of Cass Elliot, as was a one-time bodyguard of publisher Larry Flynt named Bill Mentzer, who was convicted of killing Radin and who was suspected of involvement in numerous other contract murders, including some of those attributed to David Berkowitz, who was 'examined' by psychiatrist/hypnotist Daniel Schwartz, as was Mark David Chapman, who was obsessed with the film *The Wizard of Oz* and the book *The Catcher in the Rye*, which was written by reclusive author J.D. Salinger, who served in the OSS with Henry Kissinger, who was a close adviser to Gerald Ford, who once met and shook hands with Mark David Chapman, who was 'examined' by psychiatrist/hypnotist Bernard Diamond, who also 'examined' Sirhan Sirhan, who had connections to the Process Church, as did many of those ensnared in this sordid web, including Kenneth Anger, John Phillips, Roy Radin, David Berkowitz and Charlie Manson, who attended a New Year's Eve party at the home of John Phillips, who wrote the siren song of the 'Summer of Love,' bringing thousands of hippies and flower children streaming into San Francisco and into the hands of such figures as Louis "Dr. Jolly" West, Anton LaVey, Charlie Manson, Bobby Beausoleil, Timothy Leary and Kenneth Anger, who - just three days after the suspicious death of Rolling Stone Brian Jones - filmed the Hell's Angels stomping the crowd at a 1969 Stones concert in London, just five months before they did the very same thing to the crowd at Altamont, which was organized by San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli, who consulted with F. Lee Bailey whilst the latter was busily railroading Albert DeSalvo and later consulted with Richard "The Night Stalker" Ramirez, who was offered an honorary membership in the Church of Satan by Anton LaVey's daughter Zeena, who along with boyfriend Nickolas Schreck staged an event on 8-8-88 celebrating the slaughter of the victims of the Manson Family, who some researchers believe were involved in the murders attributed to the "Zodiac," who called and sent correspondence to Melvin Belli, whose clients included the widow of Hermann Goering and Jack Ruby, who assassinated Lee Harvey Oswald, the purported assassin of John Kennedy, whose brother Robert was romantically linked to Jayne Mansfield, as was Anton LaVey, who served as Roman Polanski's technical director on the 1968 film *Rosemary's Baby*, which was set in New York's Dakota Apartments, where John Lennon was gunned down by Mark David Chapman, who shared a fixation on *The Catcher in the Rye* with failed assassin John Hinckley, Jr., who stalked actress Jodie Foster, who is working on a film biography of Leni Riefenstahl, who was met by - and admired by - fellow filmmaker Kenneth Anger, who laced his film *Scorpio Rising* with Nazi imagery, including the prominent use of swastikas, not unlike the one carved into the forehead of Charlie Manson, who - at the Cielo Drive home of Polanski and Tate - had a chance meeting with Nancy Sinatra, the daughter of Frank Sinatra, who was married to actress Mia Farrow, who starred in the Polanski-directed *Rosemary's Baby*, which was produced by Robert Evans, a friend of Henry Kissinger, who was the righthand man of President Richard Nixon, whose election was ensured by the assassination of Robert Kennedy by Sirhan Sirhan, who was yet another client of Melvin Belli, as were the Hell's Angels and Nazi-collaborator Errol Flynn, who made two films with Ronald Reagan, who was an occasional visitor to the childhood home of Candace Bergen, who - as a photojournalist - chronicled the short-lived administration of Gerald Ford, who married one of his friend Harry Conover's 'Covergirls,' who later opened the Betty Ford Center, where various celebrities in and out of this web routinely check in for tune-ups.

I could probably go on, but I really have to get back to work on my screenplay. I'm thinking of trying to break into Hollywood. I have this great script about a guy who is propelled to the heights of power through a combination of fraud, arrogance, legal manipulation and public denial to lead an imperialist military power that masterfully uses propaganda to turn reality on its head.

When the man-who-would-be-king first takes office, the public views him with a

considerable amount of well-deserved skepticism. But then there is an apparent attack upon the state which is used as a pretext to rally the support of the people behind a reactionary social agenda and a war of unspecified duration with unspecified goals. Some suspect that the attack was actually an inside job, but they are ridiculed by those who scoff at the notion that their government would attack one of its own institutions.

Meanwhile, the anti-hero sells the country out to huge corporate and financial interests and institutes overt police state measures to keep the masses in line should the people ever begin to catch on that their collective reality is little more than a grand illusion. Much later, historians reluctantly admit that the purported attack was in fact a staged provocation, but by then it is too late.

I'm almost done with the final draft. I just have to decide whether to name my anti-hero Adolf or George. Then I'm going to have my people get in touch with Jerry Bruckheimer's people and close the deal.

Of course, I might have to take out some of the plot elements and replace them with gratuitous, but really cool, special effects sequences. But it will still be a great movie. Maybe even as good as the biography of the Marquis de Sade that Kenneth Anger had long planned to film, in the original castle where deSade's crimes were committed. But that's another story altogether.

* A number of journalists have written that the killing took place later in the concert. This is perhaps due, at least in part, to the deceptive way in which the film of the event, *Gimme Shelter* (arguably the most widely viewed snuff film ever created), was edited. In the film, the killing is deliberately shown out of sequence, making it appear as though it occurred at the end of the concert. It did in fact occur while the Stones played *Sympathy for the Devil*, as can be discerned from a careful viewing of the final minutes of the video version of the film. The band, fully aware of what was going on immediately in front of the stage, played on. [<back>](#)

** Thompson, whose legal representation is provided by the same politically-connected law firm that successfully shielded John and Patsy Ramsey from prosecution, has been accused by the child witnesses in the case dubbed the 'Franklin Cover-Up.' Anger was suspected by police investigators, but was shielded from prosecution by sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, a devoted follower of Aleister Crowley. Kinsey died shortly after he and Anger visited Crowley's Thelema Abbey in Sicily. [<back>](#)

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[HOME](#)



Celluloid Heroes: Part I
or: You Can See All the Blood as You Walk Down Hollywood Boulevard
(With apologies to The Kinks)

David McGowan
January 20, 2002

“Radio and television are psychological warfare.”

Herbert Mullin, falsely accused and convicted Santa Cruz serial killer and the son of a highly-decorated WWII Army Captain

I couldn't help noticing that *Black Hawk Down* has now gone into general release. When I first heard about this film, I assumed that it would be a shameless glorification of a reprehensible, imperialist, oil-driven U.S. military operation that was itself shamelessly glorified as a humanitarian mission to feed the hungry.

But I was wrong.

As it turns out, the movie is much more than that. It is also, for instance, a shameless glorification of a convicted child rapist and sodomizer. And, lest we forget, it is one of the most obvious pieces of government-sanctioned, pro-war propaganda to come out of Hollywood since you know, I think we may have to go all the way back to *Behind Enemy Lines* on this one.

But at least that film didn't romanticize the military exploits of a child molester. For the record, the 'hero' of *Black Hawk Down*, Ranger John Grimes, was given a deceptive name-change by the filmmakers following a request from the Pentagon's PR people. It seems the Ranger's real name was John Stebbins – who is currently serving a 30-year-sentence for an attack on a child under the age of 12. Stebbins' ex-wife told the *New York Post*: "They are going to make millions off this film in which my ex-husband is portrayed as an All-American hero when the truth is he is not." (1)

He sure looks like one up there on the silver screen though. How could he not be when he is being brought to screen-life by Hollywood hunk Ewan McGregor? Far be it from me to suggest that the larger-than-life hero up there is actually a convicted pedophile. That would be like, say, suggesting that the hero played by Brad Pitt in that wretched movie about Tibet was actually a Nazi seeking 'proof' of Aryan supremacy.

Of course, using the magic of Hollywood to transform repellent cultural and historical figures into screen heroes is standard operating procedure in Tinseltown. It is something that the film industry really excels at. We are talking here, after all, about an industry that recently gave no less an appalling figure than the Marquis de Sade a Hollywood makeover.

But the point that I started to make before getting sidetracked is that the repugnant piece of celluloid known as *Black Hawk Down* is a painfully transparent piece of propaganda – its

release coming precisely at a time when the Bush team is beginning to drop broad hints that Somalia could be very highly-placed on the list of nations about to suffer from Sudden Aerial Bombardment Syndrome – all in the name of fighting terrorism, of course.

Expansion of the war into Somalia could prove to be a tough sell with the American people though. Despite being conditioned and encouraged to have famously short memories, there is always the danger that some of us might remember those graphic images of a Special Forces operative being drug through the streets of Mogadishu. Good thing then for the Washington crowd that this film came along at such an opportune time – and amid a clamor of cravenly gushing reviews.

What better way to sell a war than on the nation's theater screens? According to an article in the *Online Journal*, "Many who have seen the film report leaving the theater feeling angry, itching to 'kick some ass.'" (2) Nothing like some emotionally-charged propaganda to fire up the people for a war of 'revenge' against a nation of people depicted as barbarians.

But wait a minute, you say. This film can't be *deliberate* propaganda. Production on this movie had to have begun long before September 11, long before there was a 'War on Terrorism.' The timing of the movie must then be just a bizarre and fortuitous coincidence – just like the timing of all the other war and 'spy' films flooding the nation's theaters is just a coincidence.

The release of the aforementioned *Behind Enemy Lines*, just as real-life Special Forces operatives were being sent behind 'enemy' lines, was surely just a coincidence. Likewise for *Spy Games* and, so as not to leave out the little ones, *Spy Kids*. And *Collateral Damage* (Ahhnuld takes on the terrorists), *We Were Soldiers* (Mel Gibson helps rewrite the Vietnam War), *Hart's War* (Bruce Willis helps rewrite WWII), *The Farm* (aka the CIA's training center in Langley, Virginia), *Bad Company* (more of the same), *Spy Kids 2*, *The Accidental Spy*, *I Spy*, and the further adventures of fictional 'spies' James Bond and Jack Ryan.

And it is obviously just a coincidence that the television networks are quickly filling timeslots with spies as well, having premiered no less than three new series glorifying and romanticizing the exploits of the CIA just weeks after what was purportedly the most massive intelligence 'failure' in U.S. history.

We know that this was a coincidence because these new series were obviously 'in the can' long before 'the agency,' as CBS refers to it, had any inkling that it would be thrust into the limelight in September as it suddenly earned a much more visible role in formulating U.S. foreign and military policy, and a much larger budget.

As a brief aside, I just realized that I wrote "U.S. foreign and military policy" as though those were two separate and distinct concepts. Sorry. I have no idea what the hell I was thinking.

Anyway, the point here is that we know that the CIA's crack counterterrorism experts had no hint of the impending attacks because if they did they would have heroically risen to the task of saving the lives of the doomed inhabitants of the World Trade Center towers, just like they do every week on TV.

And that, of course, didn't happen.

So it had to be just uncanny timing that brought these new shows to America's television screens at the precise time that the much-maligned CIA was desperately in need of something to burnish its image.

And in a not-so-shocking development, the CIA is now openly participating in the crafting of its image for both the big and small screens. This is in stark contrast to the old days, when the intelligence community *covertly* participated in crafting its image – and the images of just about everything else, for that matter. Like the Hollywood crowd is fond of saying, it is the *agents* who wield the real power in Tinseltown.

With military and intelligence types overrunning both the big and small screens, some might be tempted to ponder whether there isn't a coordinated psychological warfare campaign

being waged against the American people to condition them to support a serious expansion of the 'War on Terrorism.' In retrospect, some skeptics in the crowd might even wonder whether the country hasn't been being primed for a major war for quite some time.

We have been, after all, bombarded with Steven Spielberg's masterful work of flag-waving war-glorification we all know and love as *Saving Private Ryan*. Some have noted, by the way, that Spielberg's films are structured to resemble nothing so much as Nazi propaganda films of the 1930s. Not unlike, for example, the films of Leni Riefenstahl – the master propagandist for the Reich who gave the world *Triumph of the Will*. If you aren't familiar with Riefenstahl, you will be soon: she's about to get a Hollywood makeover courtesy of actress/director Jodie Foster.

But that's beside the point ... sort of.

We also had to endure that wretched bit of historical revisionism known as *Pearl Harbor*, which was made by the very same Jerry Bruckheimer who is now offering us *Black Hawk Down*. Before *Pearl Harbor*, he gave us *Enemy of the State* and a godawful cable television series by the name of *Soldier of Fortune, Inc.*

One of Bruckheimer's earlier works was the feature-length recruiting film, *Top Gun*, that was released not long before the 1990s dawned as the decade in which it would become a rather routine practice for America's 'top gun' pilots to bomb the piss out of various defenseless nations that are selfishly hoarding their oil reserves.

In those days, Bruckheimer was working with ~~co-propagandist~~ co-producer Don Simpson – who opted out of the partnership when he was found dead in his home, allegedly the victim of a drug overdose or of natural causes, depending on who is telling the story. Simpson's personal physician and apparent drug supplier had likewise been found dead, in Simpson's poolhouse, and likewise was said to be the victim of a drug overdose. Shit happens.

In Hollywood, shit happens *all the time*. Since shortly after its emergence circa 1915 as the entertainment capital of the world, Hollywood's streets have been littered with the bodies of those who have died under, shall we say, questionable circumstances.

In September of 1920, Olive Thomas - a beautiful and very young actress with everything to live for - purportedly killed herself by overdosing on, of all things, mercury. One year later, actress Virginia Rappe turned up dead at a party hosted by silent film star Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. In February of the next year, 1922, producer William Desmond Taylor - a former British military officer whose life is shrouded in mystery to this day - was found shot to death.

In 1923, matinee idol Wally Reid was found dead in a padded cell at the mental hospital to which he had been confined. Reid was just thirty years old. His death was attributed to his morphine addiction, though how he would have fed that habit in a mental hospital remains a mystery. His widow then starred in an anti-drug film that she had lobbied for. The film was produced by Thomas Ince – a partner of D.W. Griffith, who gave the Ku Klux Klan a rather notorious Hollywood makeover in *Birth of a Nation*. Ince caught a bullet to the head in November of 1924 while attending a private party aboard William Randolph Hearst's yacht (though it was claimed that Ince died of natural causes, a story propagated primarily by Hearst's own newspapers).

And so began a tradition of unsolved and/or covered-up deaths that plagues Hollywood to this day. And the funny thing is that if you scratch beneath the surface of virtually any of these untimely deaths, you find the same cast of characters that you find lurking about the fringes of any self-respecting political 'conspiracy theory' – namely Mafioso, native and imported fascists, drug traffickers, and intelligence operatives.

As another brief aside, I just realized that I wrote "Mafioso, native and imported fascists, drug traffickers, *and* intelligence operatives," which is kind of like saying "Larry, Curly, Moe, *and* the Three Stooges."

The bodies continue to pile up in Hollywood to this day. Recent additions include:

Robert Blake's wife, who acquired some unwanted bullet holes in her head; William Shatner's wife, who ... uhhh ... drowned ("we've got you covered, Captain"); singer Aaliyah, whose plane - flown by a Florida-trained pilot with drug connections - went down because it was reportedly overweight, despite the fact that much of the band's equipment was reportedly left behind ("can we move some of this equipment out of here? - we have to make room for all these drugs"); and comedian Phil Hartman, whose shooting death was covered up with a murder/suicide story that had more holes in it than an Al Queda tunnel complex.

But here I have digressed at some length.

The point I was trying to make is that a psywar campaign has been in effect for quite some time now to condition the American people for what has been occasionally billed as World War III. The operative strategy has been to romanticize and glorify World War II, creating a kind of perverse wartime nostalgia. Hence we have seen the likes of *Pearl Harbor* on the big screen, *Band of Brothers* on the small screen, and literary masterpieces like *The Greatest Generation* in the bookstores.

And those works of 'art' are just the tip of the psywar iceberg. The media has become so besotted with images of heroic military and law enforcement personnel that the *World Socialist Web Site* recently felt compelled to commend an otherwise forgettable film simply because: "its protagonists are not generals or admirals, Navy Seals, Green Berets, marine commandos, FBI or CIA agents, state troopers or municipal police officers, sheriffs or deputy sheriffs, prison wardens or guards, secret service or Treasury agents, customs inspectors, immigration investigators, federal marshals, judges, bailiffs, parole or probation officers, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms inspectors, Internal Revenue criminal investigators, Fish and Wildlife Service special agents, or any other fictional representatives of law enforcement."

They seem to have left out federal prosecutors, district attorneys, judge advocate generals, Supreme Court justices, U.S. embassy personnel, White House staffers and well, I think you get the idea.

As for the spy trade, there have historically been two primary representations of intelligence operatives in our ~~propaganda~~ entertainment media, both of them grotesquely disinformational and at least one of them crafted by the spooks themselves. That would be the notion of the intelligence operative as a dashing, cultured, romantic hero. The prototype for this version of the fictional spy was largely provided by Ian Fleming, creator of the James Bond character.

Fleming was a British intelligence operative during (and after) World War II, when he worked closely with Nazi 'defector' Rudolph Hess and a rather notorious character named Aleister Crowley – a flamboyant occultist, British and probable U.S. intelligence operative, and avid German and Nazi propagandist during World Wars I and II. Fleming's work is now being carried on by the likes of Tom Clancy, a 'former' Naval Intelligence asset and good friend of George Bush.

The other predominant image of the intelligence community that has permeated the media is that of 'the gang that couldn't shoot straight' – the spy as a well-intentioned, bumbling fool. On the big screen, the *Pink Panther* films established the model for this archetype, along with such television series as *Get Smart*, which was co-created by Buck Henry. Henry also was credited with the screenplay for the film *Day of the Dolphin* – a blatantly disinformational look at the work of MK-ULTRA operative John Lilly.

Assisting Henry on creating *Get Smart*, by the way, was Mel Brooks, whose most recent endeavor was adapting for the Broadway stage his film *The Producers* – an offensive piece of work that trivializes the crimes of the Third Reich and casts Herr Hitler as a cartoonish character. Strangely enough, Brooks chose to stage the gala premier of his play on April 20, 2001 – the birthday of its protagonist.

Brooks wasn't the first to present a buffoonish screen image of Hitler. Charlie Chaplin did it far earlier – back in 1940 when *The Great Dictator* was released just after the Nazi

invasion of the Soviet Union. The funny thing was though that Charlie pretty much wore the same makeup to play the *Fuhrer* that he had been wearing for the previous twenty years.

Chaplin's toothbrush-mustachioed 'Little Tramp' character was created and began gracing the nation's silent movie screens just as the similarly adorned Adolf Hitler began his climb to power in Germany's fledgling Nazi Party following World War I (after, it should probably be noted, spending some time in the Pasewalk Sanitarium). By the time the real Hitler stepped onto the world stage, therefore, the American people were predisposed to view the silly-looking character as little more than a joke.

Coincidence? Probably so, but I thought I'd throw it out there anyway – along with the fact that the two men were born just hours apart: Chaplin on April 18, 1889 and Hitler on April 20, 1889. That means that actually, I have no idea what the hell that means, but it seems like it should mean something.

Chaplin, by the way, who shared with Ranger Stebbins a well-known appetite for underage girls, was among the elite guests aboard Hearst's yacht the night Ince was killed, may have been present at the party of his friend Fatty Arbuckle that ended in the death of Virginia Rappe, and was the guest of honor at a 1972 party at which Oscar Levant made his last public appearance before being discovered dead.

Though this warning may be a little belated, I would strongly caution everyone out there against attending any parties where Chaplin is on the guest list.

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[HOME](#)